<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>:

Please amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing method implemented by a computer for selectively storing an input image in a database, comprising the steps of:

(a) acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

(b) acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information;

(c) searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image in the database by using the first and second search information;

(d) converting the input image into <u>outline</u> ~~vector~~ data and storing the <u>outline</u> ~~vector~~ data in the database, in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input image is not found in said step (c); and

(e) declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image is found in said step (c),

wherein <u>the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object</u> ~~said second search information comprises a total number of blocks obtained by region segmentation of the input image, and it is determined whether said total number of blocks falls within a predetermined range~~.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

(f) registering the first search information as an index for searching for the original data file in an index file.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a keyword for searching using the input image.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a data size of the original data file.

· 5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises date information of the original data file.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises information associated with a storage location of the original data file which is extracted on the basis of pointer information in the input image.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises a character code of a character recognition result which is obtained by performing a character recognition process with respect to a character region in the input image.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information ~~further~~ comprises feature data of each block obtained by region segmentation of the input image.

9. (Cancelled).

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

(f) converting the input image, which has been converted into the <u>outline</u> ~~vector~~ data, into data in a format which can be handled by application software.

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of:

(g) registering the first search information, in an index file, as an index for searching for an image represented by the <u>outline</u> ~~vector~~ data stored in the database in the step (d).

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

(f) outputting the original data file, wherein pointer information is added to the original data file.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 13, wherein the pointer information is added as a digital watermark to the original data file.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein in the step (c), the original data file is searched for by using at least one of keyword search, full-text search, and layout search.

16. (Currently Amended) An image processing system which selectively stores an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

an input unit constructed to input first search information associated with the input image;

a unit constructed to acquire feature data contained in the input image as second search information;

a search unit constructed to search for an original data file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

a unit constructed to convert the input image into outline ~~vector~~ data and to store the outline ~~vector~~ data in the database, in a case where no original data file corresponding to the input image is found by said search unit, and

a unit constructed to decline storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit,

wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object ~~said second search information comprises a total number of blocks obtained by region segmentation of the input image, and it is determined whether said total number of blocks falls within a predetermined range~~.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer executable program stored on a computer-readable medium for selectively storing an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

code for acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

code for acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information;

code for searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

code for converting the input image into outline ~~vector~~ data and storing the outline ~~vector~~ data in the database, in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input image is not found; and

code for declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image is found,

wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object ~~said second search information comprises a total number of blocks obtained by region segmentation of the input image, and it is determined whether said total number of blocks falls within a predetermined range.~~

18. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium having a computer executable program stored thereon for selectively storing an image file corresponding to an input image, the program comprising:

code for acquiring first search information associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user;

code for acquiring feature data contained in the input image as second search information;

code for searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first and second search information;

code for converting the input image into outline ~~vector~~ data and storing the outline ~~vector~~ data in the database, in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input image is not found; and

code for declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image is found,

wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object ~~said second search information comprises a total~~

number of blocks obtained by region segmentation of the input image, and it is determined

whether said total number of blocks falls within a predetermined range.